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ABSTRACT

This learning package is designed to assist the teacher in understanding and dealing with classroom discipline. Tasks are presented to encompass knowledge, comprehension, vicarious application, and practical application. Knowledge-based tasks define the term discipline and review nine theoretical principles relevant to resolution of common discipline problems. Comprehension tasks identify discipline problems relevant to each of the nine principles within the context of printed case studies and role playing scenes. Case-posed discipline problems and role-played resolutions are utilized in the vicarious application segment. Finally, practical application is accomplished by identifying and applying appropriate theoretical principles to discipline problems which occur in context of extended laboratory experience. (MJM)

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# CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE -

# A LEARNING PACKAGE

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# PREFACE

The purpose of this learning package is <u>not</u> to generate a preoccupation or fascination with the subject of classroom discipline. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged by most experienced teachers that their difficulties with discipline diminished as their skills in diagnosing pupil interests and in the use of appropriate teaching strategies and materials increased. Why, then, the reader might justifiably ask, should we concern ourselves with a package entitled "Classroom Discipline?"

National polls of neophyte teachers invariably proclaim "discipline" as a paramount concern of those new in the profession. "Discipline problems" count significantly among reasons given for teachers leaving the field. Discipline is a real and acute concern of the beginning classroom practitioner, one he often must conquer before growth in other areas of professional acumen practically can be realized. It is in the spirit of meeting this pervasive and practical professional need that this package is offered.

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## OBJECTIVES OF THIS LEARNING PACKAGE

Upon completion of the package, the i.m.* will be able to:

| | |
|---|---|
| TASK #I<br>(Knowledge) | (a) Define the term "discipline."<br>(b) List nine theoretical principles relevant to resolution of common discipline problems. |
| TASK #II<br>(Comprehension) | (a) Identify discipline problems relevant to each of the nine principles within context of printed case studies<br>(b) Role play scenes which characterize problems relevant to the nine theoretical principles. |
| TASK #III<br>(Vicarious Application) | (a) Apply theoretical principles to case-posed discipline problems.<br>(b) Role play resolutions to discipline problems posed by live classroom observation, video tape, printed case reports, or role played situations. |
| TASK #IV<br>(Practical Application) | (a) Identify and apply appropriate theoretical principles to discipline problems which occur in context of extended laboratory experience. |

* Abbreviation "i.m." stands for "instructional manager."

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TASK #I (a) Define the term "discipline."

(Knowledge)

Performance Criterion #1

Given the definitions which follow, the i.m. from memory, in his own words, will be able to write a definition of the term "discipline."

Following are several current definitions representing present conceptions of this term:

> . . . discipline: (1) the process or result of directing or subordinating immediate wishes, impulses, desires, or interests for the sake of an ideal or for the purpose of gaining more effective, dependable action; (2) persistent, active, and self-directed pursuit of some considered course of action in the face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty; . . .[1]

> Discipline refers fundamentally to the principle that each organism learns in some degree to control itself so as to conform to the forces around it with which it has experiences.[2]

> Classroom discipline is a condition where pupils are using their time in educationally desirable ways. . . . The test of discipline is whether or not the behavior of the group permits everyone to work effectively.[3]

> Discipline is the means by which individuals are brought to subordinate their goals to the needs of the group and do what is necessary for the good of all.[4]

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[1]Carter V. Good (ed.), Dictionary of Education, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959, p. 176.

[2]Asahel D. Woodruff, as quoted in Chester W. Harris (ed.), Encyclopedia of Educational Research, New York, Macmillan Co., 1960 (Third edition), p. 382.

[3]Lee J. Cronbach, Educational Psychology, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963, p. 534.

[4]Donald Snygg, "Discipline," Childhood Education, 31:258, February, 1955.

TASK #I

(Knowledge)

(b) List nine theoretical principles relevant to resolution of common discipline problems.

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Performance Criterion #1

Given the print context which follows, the i.m. from memory will be able to list, in his own words, the nine principles with 100% accuracy.

Principles Relevant to Resolution of Discipline Problems

**Principle 1:** Consistent expectations lead to disciplined reactions.

Some teaching tasks more obviously seem to be of professional caliber than others because they demand constant judgmental activity toward the achievement of a preordained goal. The encouragement of consistent patterns of reaction in the classroom is such an activity and a substantial background of professional preparation and experience is prerequisite to its attainment.

Essentially, consistency in working with youngsters implies a regular, dependable set of standards against which the child can evaluate his proposed behavior. If the child on one occasion is punished for speaking out of turn and subsequently, in the same circumstance, is rewarded for like behavior, he has no guidepost to use as reference for his future impulse to speak out. Neither he nor the teacher can predict what his subsequent responses should be.

Havighurst makes pointed reference to this motion when he says,

TASK #II

(Comprehension)

(a) Identify discipline problems relevant to each of the nine principles within context of printed case studies.

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Performance Criterion #1

Given the case studies which follow, the i.m, to the satisfaction of his teacher-educators, will write a logical one-sentence summary of the most basic discipline problem inherent in each case, will identify at least one logical principle which relates to the case, and will provide supportive reasons for relating a specific principle to a specific case.

TASK #II

(Comprehension)

(b) Role play scenes which characterize problems relevant to the nine theoretical principles.

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Performance Criterion #1

Given an assigned principle, the i.m. with three or four peers, (to the satisfaction of his teacher-educator), will create a role played scene illustrative of classroom behavior to which that principle appropriate might apply.

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TASK #III

(Vicarious Application)

(b) Role play resolutions to discipline problems posed by live classroom observation, video tape, printed case reports, or role played situations.

Performance Criterion #1

Given a discipline problem and an applicable principle, the i.m. together with 3-4 peers, will role play a scene calculated to demonstrate application of the principle to resolution of the problem. Evaluation by 2-4 of the i.m.'s peers and a teacher educator will take into consideration:

1. extent to which role played resolution related to observable information provided within the discipline problem as exemplified
2. thoroughness of role played teacher action in terms of time, place, personalities involved, and interaction content
3. consistency of pattern of role played action to the static principle.

TASK #IV

(Practical Application in lab setting)

(a) Identify and apply appropriate theoretical principles to discipline problems which occur in context of extended laboratory experience.

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Performance Criterion #1

Given a laboratory experience extending over a period of weeks, the i.m. will (1) identify discipline problems, (2) relate appropriate theoretical principles to those problems and (3) initiate action (based on the appropriate theory) calculated to resolve or minimize the problem(s). Evaluation by the supervisor(s) of the laboratory experience will be based on:

1. consistency of logic employed by i.m.
2. reaction of children to action initiated by i.m.

Performance Criterion #2 (optional, student-elicited)

Given an extended laboratory experience posing a broad gamut of disciplinary problems, the i.m. through research and field testing will expand his repetoire of theoretical principles to more completely meet needs posed within the laboratory situation.

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> Through consistent discipline the child learns that certain behavior will always be followed by punishment, even though it may be light punishment. . . .Inconsistent discipline, by which we mean punishment for doing a thing one day, and indifference, or even reward for doing the same thing at a later time, leaves the child unable to predict what will happen.
>
> Consistent discipline helps the child to learn that there is a moral orderliness in his world.[5]

Principle 2: Understanding of purposes behind rules promotes rule acceptance.

This principle is a worthy tenet for the educational practitioner for two basic reasons. It is commensurate with those democratic ideals which our schools strive to imbue in the effort toward preparing an enlightened citizenry. It is commensurate with those principles of learning which suggest the most expedient means of transmitting ideas. With regard to this latter concept, Hilgard, describing generally accepted principles of learning theory, makes the following statements,

> Active participation by a learner is preferable to passive reception when learning, for example, from a lecture or a motion picture.
>
> A motivated learner acquires what he learns more readily than one who is not motivated. The relevant motives include both general and specific ones, for example, desire to learn, need for achievement (general), desire for a certain reward or to avoid a threatened punishment (specific).[6]

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[5]Robert Havighurst, "Functions of Successful Discipline," Understanding the Child, 21:36, April, 1952.

[6]Ernest R. Hilgard, Theories of Learning (Second Edition), New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956, p. 486.

Principle 3: Conflicting codes of conduct interacting cause confusion.

Somewhat related to Principle 1, this statement is precautionary in nature. Rather than outlining a specific course of action it signals warning of a danger area. Again it is up to the professional aptitude of the practitioner to analyze the problem and to identify an appropriate course of action.

The following comments describe the nature and complexity of conflicts resulting when two or more incompatible codes make contact. They also suggest that there is a considerable range of severity which applies to inter-code conflicts, some resulting almost inevitably because of the natural developmental patterns of youth and others occurring because of acute social discrepancies.

> The pupil finds demands of teachers difficult to satisfy when they run counter to his other training. Boys are especially likely to be in conflict with teachers because the teacher disapproves of pupils who are rough, noisy and unmanageable. Yet in middle childhood these traits are encouraged by peers and, more subtly, by parents.[7]

> The gang delinquent may be a secure person conforming to the subculture in which he finds himself. His peers accept and reward him, and lead him into conduct that the larger society disapproves.[8]

Redl even goes beyond the point of describing some inter-code controversies as inevitable. He expresses a real concern that adults, both parents and teachers, in trying to maintain constant

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[7] Cronbach, op. cit., p. 116.

[8] Ibid., p. 639.

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harmony, will disassociate and artificially prevent contacts between groups of varied normative orientations. These experiences, he pleads, are necessary learning opportunities, without which true maturity may not be achieved.

> ... . it is usually not before the later grade school years (fourth to seventh) that an entirely new type of "we" feeling becomes important to them (children). In those years they develop a strong need to feel a part of their own age-gang, even if the need demands that they set apart from or against the adult. At this time it is very important that your child do something about that need -- yield to it, even if yielding spells temporary and seemingly distressing conflict with you or the school.[9]

In considering inter-code disruptions of a more severe nature, those more likely to generate serious discipline problems in the school context, it is well to examine some of the limitations under which teachersmust expect to operate and some of the defense mechanisms with which they must be prepared to cope. Cronbach's comments are pertinent here.

> Most often, the role of the teacher is to augment the home influence, to capitalize upon and make more definite the pupil's values. But the educator wishes to wean pupils from attitudes learned in the home that are socially undesirable. What happens when a pupil is exposed to conflicting codes, or confronted with evidence incompatible with his beliefs?
>
> People hold tenaciously to systems of attitudes they have built up. If they are strongly committed to a belief, contradictory evidence rarely will shake it; they will find some way to make the evidence conform to the belief (Festinger et al., 1956) or they will ignore the disturbing argument (Kelly and Volkart, 1952).[10]

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[9]Fritz Redl, Understanding Children's Behavior, New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949, p. 33.

[10]Cronbach, op. cit., p. 445-6.

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Cronbach further outlines limits of expectations in this regard when he says,

> The school cannot outweigh all the other influences on the pupil. Influence on character is personal, and the pupil is far more deeply involved with parents and peers than with the average teacher.[11]

Thus it would seem that some disciplinary difficulties are beyond the pale of classroom treatment, and that the teacher's only alternatives lie either in ignoring the problem, or in trying to move the incompatible element to a situation where a more appropriate adjustment might be realized.

Principle 4: Flexible controls are needed to accommodate individual differences.

Historical consideration of disciplinary trends has indicated a substantial swing away from uniform demands upon children and toward a philosophy embracing the acceptance of a variety of behaviors within groups and even within the individual when circumstances warrant it.

This does not imply a disregard for consistent patterns of behavior as some practitioners, especially neophytes, seem prone to believe. It rather suggests that flexibility should be encouraged whenever and wherever reasoned necessity dictates that a more expedient learning situation may result because of change. Emphasis is upon consistent patterns of behavior for the individual. Reference to this point is made in order that any confusion

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[11] Cronbach, op. cit., p. 654.

regarding Principles 1 and 4 may be allayed.

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A statement from Hilgard helps to focus upon and to describe the import of the concept of individual differences in current disciplinary practice. "The personal history of the individual, for example, his reaction to authority, may hamper or enhance his ability to learn from a given teacher."[12] This notion recalls the fact that every individual, whether student or teacher, must make an adjustment to each new social experience, and that he makes this adjustment on the basis of those experiences particular to his past which have assumed significance sufficient unto retention and reapplication. Conscious attention to the influences created by the differences between individuals provides the teacher with a key to many of the problems of control.

Principle 5: Discipline problems often grow from accumulated disinterest.

Remedying problems which have resulted as the outgrowth of much accumulated disinterest is obviously a complex problem, one for which no ready set of answers should be propounded. Authorities suggest the appropriateness of taking certain kinds of action, however, and recommend the following guidelines for directing professional analysis and treatment of problems of this kind.

> Setting goals that can be reached is one obvious answer. The other treatment for discouragement is to go back and make the work clear, even if the deficiencies piled up years before have to be treated one by one.[13]

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[12]Hilgard, op. cit., p. 486.

[13]Cronbach, op. cit., p. 535.

> Tolerance for failure is best taught through providing a backlog of success that compensates for experienced failure.[14]
>
> The successful teacher concentrates on matters other than classroom order and control. He encourages the class to share his interest in the activities and subject matter with which they are concerned, and problems of order do not arise.[15]

Principle 6: As motivation, reward is preferable to punishment.

The notion that reward is preferable to punishment for motivation purposes is supported by evidence accruing from the laboratory experiments of the psychologist and by the logic of the socially-oriented philosopher. From the psychologist's viewpoint it seems obvious that there are a great many negative connotations to the act of punishing. Symonds states,

> . . . emphasis on the positive attitudes and direction of conduct is entirely different from the repression of impulses and the inhibition of behavior. Repressions serve the needs of the parent and the teacher but do not help the child become more self-directing, which should be the primary goal of education.[16]
>
> Punishment carries with it many undesirable concomitants.[17]
>
> Perhaps the most devastating effect of punishment is the lowering of self-esteem and the arousal of feelings of inferiority that follow in its wake.[18]

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[14]Hilgard, op. cit., p. 486.

[15]Percival M. Symonds, "Classroom Discipline," Teachers College Record, 51:155, December, 1949.

[16]Ibid., p. 149.

[17]Ibid., p. 150.

[18]Ibid., p. 151.

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> . . . punishment informs only as to what is wrong or unacceptable and the learner, even after receiving such information, is faced with the problem of finding the right response.[19]

And Cronbach suggests,

> Learning is much impaired when the punishment is inevitable, but not when a person feels that an alert performance will spare him from punishment. In the classroom, punishment disrupts the class; pupils become tense, antagonistic to the teacher, and antagonistic to the subject under study.[20]

These comments implying that punishment tends to satisfy only the teacher's immediate need of securing a temporarily uniform group reaction at the expense of the basic needs of individuals, are a frontal attack upon use of punishment in the classroom.

Other objections are less basic and instead deal with concomitants to the direct act of punishment. One concomitant evil, social in nature, is described by Hilgard,

> Learning under the control of reward is usually preferable to learning under the control of punishment. Correspondingly, learning motivated by success is preferable to learning motivated by failure. Even though the theoretical issue is still unresolved, the practical outcome must take into account the social by-products, which tend to be more favorable under reward than under punishment.[21]

Cronbach states emphatically that punishment often succeeds in engendering antagonism toward subject matter on the part of the student.[22]

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[19]Percival M. Symonds, What Education Has to Learn from Psychology (Third Edition), Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1960, p. 32.

[20]Cronbach, op. cit., p. 496.

[21]Hilgard, op. cit., p. 486.

[22]Cronbach, loc. cit.

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Principle 7: The individual and group consequences of a given disciplinary act may differ.

The fact that the individual and group reactions to a given disciplinary act may vary suggests that the classroom practitioner needs to scrutinize each disciplinary action that is contemplated in the light of its double-faceted potentialities.[23] Sheviakov and Redl prognosticate regarding the percentages of discipline problems which seem attributable either to group, to individual, or to combined causes.

> Only about ten percent of all cases of school discipline are due to "individual disturbances" clear and proper. About thirty percent at least are cases where problem behavior is produced entirely by group psychological inadequacies of school life. About sixty percent of the cases seem to us to involve both personal case history of the individual and some deficienty in the psychological structure of the group. This means, then, that at least ninety percent of all discipline cases are in dire need of group psychological analysis and consideration.
>
> Prevention of discipline problems, then, must involve a quite extensive job of group psychological engineering.[24]

The causes of discipline problems need to be considered in arriving at judgments regarding the individual and group consequences of disciplinary action.

Realization of the extent to which classrooms are plagued with these double-faceted problems, and motivation to seek and to

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[23]George V. Sheviakov and Fritz Redl, Discipline for Today's Children and Youth, Washington, D.C., National Education Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1956, p. 19-22.

[24] Ibid., p. 45.

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identify them, set the scene wherein professional judgment must take over the task of designing specific solutions for particular problems. Here again, only general outlining of procedures is appropriate. The law of marginal antisepsis provides such guidance.

> By this we mean that a technique which is right for the child's problems must at least be harmless to the group. A technique which is rightly chosen for its effect upon the group must at least be harmless to the individuals involved.[25]

Based upon more philosophic grounds, the notion that a warm and basically democratic classroom climate can be most productive of fruitful change also gives direction to the problems of handling group and individual concerns simultaneously. In this regard Symond notes,

> Eventually a class must so trust and respect the teacher that he can deal with individuals as occasions arise without disturbing his relationship to the group as a whole.[26]

Principle 8: The classroom context precludes solution of some severe discipline problems.

This principle is directed just as much toward encouragement of insightful self-analysis on the part of the teacher, as it is toward application to children in the classroom. Especially, the neophyte teacher, recognizing his inexperience, may tend to revert to self-condemnation and despair if he runs afoul of serious discipline problems. This principle, then, is projected with the expectation that it will encourage objective professional analysis

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[25]Sheviakov and Redl, op. cit., p. 25.

[26]Percival M. Symonds, "Classroom Discipline," Teachers College Record, 51:157-8, December, 1949.

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of those responsibilities appropriate to the school so that the teacher may accurately assess his professional reaction to the behavior of the child or of the group.

Sheviakov and Redl speak to the point that the structure of the average classroom is something less than adequate. Not only physical equipment and number of children but the expressed and expected methods of grouping, evaluating, teaching, providing guidance, and organizing materials often are wanting in flexibility and in practicality.

> For teachers, while invited or urged to become psychological, are still loaded with classes too large and with work loads too predefined to permit individualized work. It is the frustration of these factual limitations, rather than a lack of forward-mindedness, which causes most of the dissension and dissatisfaction.[27]

A number of factors involving children and the predisposition with which they come to school make for problems which defy solution in the classroom context. The home and community generate many disturbances.

> Even the best teachers, however, find that disciplinary crises arise on some occasions, but every teacher should recognize that they may arise through no fault of his. . . . Hostility directed toward a teacher or the classroom situation is in many instances a displacement of hostility which has been aroused in some other situation. The teacher should recognize this and refuse to be drawn into the relationship.[28]

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[27]Sheviakov and Redl, op. cit., p. 18-19.

[28]Symonds, op. cit., 51:156.

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> The school cannot outweigh all the other influences on the pupil. Influence on character is personal, and the pupil is far more deeply involved with parents and peers than with the average teacher.[29]

Principle 9: Careful recognition that a disciplinary act influences either (1) surface behavior or (2) basic attitudes is desirable.

This statement prescribes a dichotomy of purposes for discipline. There seems small doubt that both purposes exist and that one or the other must serve as the goal for every disciplinary action taken. That many teachers take disciplinary actions without being cognizant of which purpose they are serving also is apparent. This reason alone would substantiate including this concept in a group of disciplinary principles. for it would seem utterly impossible to devise appropriate means of control without first realizing what expected outcomes were intended.

Many authorities do speak to this point with conviction. Sheviakov and Redl make the most forthright statement of the principle.

> The purpose of any disciplinary measure can be geared in two directions, namely: (a) the technique can be planned to influence surface behavior right then and there; or (b) the technique can be charged with the task of influencing basic attitudes.[30]

Symonds, in expressing doubts as to the ultimate merits of punishment, makes a strong plea for the kind of discipline aimed at correcting basic attitudes.

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[29]Cronbach, op. cit., p. 654.

[30]Sheviakov and Redl, op. cit., p. 28.

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> One cannot escape the basic fact that neither punishment nor neglect considers the underlying needs. Much of the undesirable behavior which a child exhibits in the classroom is neurotic -- an unsatisfactory attempt to satisfy some underlying need -- but neither punishment nor neglect gets to the root of this trouble. It is more important to solve the basic conflict that gives rise to the undesirable behavior than it is to attempt to suppress the behavior directly.[31]

A return glance at the second definition of discipline offered by the Dictionary of Education -- "(2) persistent, active, and self-directed pursuit of some considered course of action in the face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty"[32] -- will recall the ideal associated with this concept of democratic discipline. It is the ideal commonly subscribed to by learning theorists, curriculum architects, and those who provide professional preparation for teachers. It is an ideal based upon the demonstrated logic of democracy: that man's highest productivity accrues from a freedom limited only by rational appreciation of the rights of others.

That a philosophy of discipline should receive support from scientifically oriented psychology suggests a union of strength. Yet democratic discipline -- the discipline that emanates from the self and that aims at changing attitudes -- is not the standard of achievement in our schools today. The structure of the school, the attitude of the community, and the preparation of the teacher frequently prescribe a surface treatment. Our definition of discipline still includes two dichotomous, ill-mated halves. The

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[31] Symonds, op. cit., p. 51:153.

[32] Good, op. cit.

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gap between the ideal and the actual is apparent. Reality informs us that, at this juncture, making a professionally informed choice between surface and basic treatment of discipline problems is still the practical expedient.